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FAIRFIELD  
The Old Academy  
Fairfield, Connecticut

HABS No. Conn. 28

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Connecticut

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Harold H. Davis, District Officer  
29 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Conn.

OLD FAIRFIELD ACADEMY

Fairfield, Fairfield County, Conn.

Owner: Town of Fairfield, Connecticut

Date of Erection: 1804

Architect or Builder: Not recorded

Present Condition: Fair. Recently restored to original condition

Number of Stories: Two and one-half

Materials of Construction: Frame-clapboard exterior  
Shingle roof  
Brick chimneys  
Stone foundations

Other Existing Records: Written account \*The Old Academy\* by  
Elizabeth L. Child, 1927.

List of Photographs:

1. Northwest Elevation (Front)
2. Southwest Elevation
3. East Elevation
4. Mantel in Class Room
5. Mantel in Class Room

OLD FAIRFIELD ACADEMY  
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Education has always been considered a matter of the greatest importance in Fairfield, but the public schools evidently did not meet the requirements of many of its citizens for in 1802 a group of people decided to start an Academy. There was considerable discussion as to the best location for a building and the north side of the green was first suggested, but the present site was finally selected, the land being appropriated by the town.

The building was finished in May, 1804. At that time, a resolution was adopted at "a General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, held in Hartford, on the second Thursday of May, A.D. 1804, incorporating the Proprietors of the Fairfield Academy in Connecticut".

Nothing is said in the records about tuition fees, but we learn from several papers relating to academy affairs that for the sum of \$4.50 one might attend the academy for twelve weeks.

The records tell us that the building was always in need of repairs and in 1865 the following was published about the building: "The school and recitation rooms were spacious, well ventilated and neatly furnished. Two large handsome Franklin stoves were placed at each end of the school room, and inside half blinds were affixed to all the windows. These blinds were deemed advisable lest the attention of the pupils might be distracted by the large number of vehicles so constantly passing by, as Fairfield Avenue was then the post road between New York and Boston, and such was the amount of travel that no less than six taverns were well supported.

It is further recorded that the late President Dwight of Yale College always manifested a warm interest in the prosperity of the Academy and selected the teachers for the same. The institution under such eminent teachers flourished many years and probably no school of its size in the state can produce a record of as many illustrious men and women whose names were once enrolled as pupils of Fairfield Academy".

The spiritual needs of the village have been supplied by this building, for the lower floor was used for Sunday evening meetings until 1860.

In 1865 a subscription was raised for necessary repairs. In the same year, a gilded ball was placed on the dome of the edifice. This ball, which is composed of sixty pieces and valued at \$30.00 was constructed by Mr. Thomas F. Rowland of Long Island, the well known builder of the famous Monitor and who most generously donated the ball to the academy.

The day before the ball was to be placed on the dome, it was opened and the newspaper of the day with an interesting document containing the names of the subscribers to the improvement fund, the mechanics employed, construction and donor of the ball, and a list of schools are placed in it. When Time with its destroying hand, rends that ball posterity will read with interest the names of those who, imbued with the same feeling as to their ancestors, endeavored to restore the pristine form of the Fairfield Academy. Time, however, was not the destroying hand that removed the ball. No one knows where it went.

The original desks used had lids which lifted up and these seats had no backs. There were later replaced with desks with fixed tops and the front of one desk made the back for the seat of the next one. The students wrote entirely with quill pens, which the teacher had to make and mend.

Source of Information: Booklet entitled "The Old Academy, Fairfield, Connecticut" by Elizabeth L. Child for the Fairfield Historical Society in 1927.

Author: *Margaret M. Blake*  
Approved: *Harold W. Davis*

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